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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5098  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 3927  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 2664  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 2362  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 9925  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 8390  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA IMMEDIATE 6653  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 0765  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 2097  
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 8975  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG IMMEDIATE 0644  
RHMFIUU/USFJ IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RHMFIUU/COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR IMMEDIATE  
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SUBJECT: INITIAL REACTION TO DPRK DEAL MOSTLY POSITIVE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Reaction to the announcement that Japan will partially lift its unilateral sanctions on North Korea, in return for a reinvestigation into the abductions issue and cooperation on repatriating four 1970's-era Japanese hijackers, dominated the news over the weekend. Media attention focused on the potential ramifications for delisting. Initial reporting suggests that a wide range of government officials and lawmakers consider the agreement reached at the June 11-12 working-level talks in Beijing a positive step, pending further DPRK action. Abductee families, predictably, have taken the opposite view, a view echoed by the general public in early polling. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Most media outlets framed DPRK interest in making a deal as an attempt to sway the United States to move more quickly on delisting North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Japanese press gave wide coverage to official U.S. reaction welcoming any "sincere actions" by the DPRK on the abductions issue. Many focused on the significance of the talks for improved Japan-DPRK relations, speculating that any improvement in bilateral relations could speed delisting. An unnamed "senior MOFA official" was quoted in the Asahi as saying Japan needs to look at the big picture, including progress on denuclearization, a stance that the Asahi interpreted to mean possible acceptance of U.S. delisting. At the same time, most reports have also cautioned against being overly optimistic that the DPRK will honor these new commitments. Media reports have been quick to point out that Japan considers progress in the bilateral talks "insufficient" to trigger participation in energy aid to the DPRK at this point.

¶3. (SBU) Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura, briefing the press June 13 on the results of the June 11-12 working-level bilateral talks in Beijing, said the agreement represents "a certain degree of progress." He cautioned, however, that Japan has only agreed to lift the restrictions pending agreement on procedures for reinvestigating the fate of the abductees. If North Korea complies, he said, Japan will once again allow personal travel between the two countries, including on North Korean chartered flights, and open Japanese ports to North Korean ships for the loading of humanitarian relief aid. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, more guarded in his comments, said only that "we are at the starting line of the negotiation process." Special Advisor

to the Prime Minister on Abductions Kyoko Nakayama urged the government to seek "concrete progress" on the investigation into abductions before lifting sanctions, and to re-impose sanctions if progress is unsatisfactory. Unnamed MOFA officials were quoted as saying that they would coordinate with other relevant agencies over the next few days to look at the procedures for partially lifting the sanctions.

¶4. (SBU) Japanese lawmakers were split over whether the outcome of the talks represents real progress. Independent Lower House member Takeo Hiranuma, leader of a conservative supra-partisan group calling for early repatriation of the abductees, was cautiously optimistic in statements to the press. Opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, on the other hand, criticized the government for "too easily lifting sanctions," absent any real progress on abductions. An anonymous ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) "hard-liner" was quoted as saying that two years of sanctions had produced no progress on abductions. Former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki, leader of a rival supra-partisan group urging greater engagement with North Korea, welcomed the resumption of dialogue. LDP Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki, in several televised appearances over the weekend, urged that Japan be involved in the reinvestigation into abductions.

¶5. (SBU) The Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korean, briefed separately by the government on June 13, reacted quickly to the decision to partially lift sanctions. In a press conference the same evening, leaders

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conveyed the disappointment of the families of the abductees at the way the government had "lowered the bar" in defining the most recent DPRK overtures as "progress on abductions." The public appears generally opposed to lifting sanctions as well, according to an initial public opinion poll. A Mainichi survey conducted June 14-15 registered opposition by 55 percent of respondents, as opposed to only 34 percent in favor.  
SCHIEFFER